



# BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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June 15, 1987

87-90

## Peace Committee Completes Report

By Dan Martin

ST. LOUIS (BP)--In a marathon meeting that ended at 4:15 a.m. Monday, June 15, the Southern Baptist Convention Peace Committee completed its final report on ways to resolve the controversy in the 14.6-million-member denomination.

Chairman Charles G. Fuller, pastor of First Baptist Church of Roanoke, Va., said the final report was adopted without opposing vote from the 20 members present.

Fuller also said there will be no minority report and all members will be present on the stage when the report is presented to messengers at 8:40 p.m. Tuesday, June 16. He added the report will be available through the Convention Bulletin that morning.

"We felt it was important to continue the meeting until we had completed the report, even if it meant meeting until 4:30 a.m.," Fuller said.

He added the "substance" of the report had been completed when the committee met in Atlanta May 4, but the committee spent the ensuing weeks working on wording of several sections of the lengthy report.

The committee was created in 1985 and charged with the responsibility of determining the sources of controversy in the SBC, making findings and recommending ways to bring reconciliation to the denomination. It made a preliminary report at the 1986 annual meeting, and was instructed to bring a final report no later than the 1987 annual meeting, June 16-18 in Cervantes Convention Center in St. Louis.

Although he did not discuss the substance of the report, Fuller told Baptist Press the "diversity of the committee is reflected in the report itself."

"Not everyone got all he or she wanted in this report, but we have come together with a report upon which we can all agree," Fuller added.

Absent from the meeting were Daniel Vestal, pastor of First Baptist Church of Midland, Texas, and John Sullivan, pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church in Shreveport, La., both of whom were unable to attend because of previous commitments.

Panama Emergency  
To Close Churches

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Baptist Press  
6/15/87

PANAMA CITY, Panama (BP)--Christians in Panama will have to worship in their homes until the state of emergency declared by the government June 11 is lifted.

The state of emergency suspended civil liberties and banned all public meetings as soldiers patrolled the streets of Panama City in the wake of days of political demonstrations and violence.

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"We will not be able to even get together in churches this Sunday," reported Southern Baptist missionary Sharon Cook by telephone June 12. "They have said that the only place you can meet with anybody is in your home. We have a news blackout here completely, no newspapers other than the one state newspaper. We are able to telephone to each other and ... we can move a little bit. But we have to be careful where we move."

Americans in Panama, including the 24 Southern Baptist missionaries assigned to the country, have been advised to avoid unnecessary travel while the violence continues. The U.S. State Department issued a travel advisory recommending that American citizens planning trips to Panama delay their departure. A U.S. consular agent was reported injured by buckshot in Panama City.

The demonstrations against the government began June 9 following charges of electoral fraud involving the Panamanian military.

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HMB Adds First Employee  
Under Lewis Administration

Baptist Press  
6/15/87

By Leisa Hammett and Joe Westbury

ATLANTA (BP)--In his first executive committee meeting as president of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, Larry Lewis broke with hiring tradition by asking the prospective employee to affirm his belief in the Baptist Faith and Message Statement in front of the board members.

After answering a series of questions asked by the new president, Richard Reasoner of Kansas City, Mo., became the first elected staff member to be hired under the new administration. He will join the board as director of the counseling services department on July 1.

Acting president Bob Banks, with Lewis' approval, had recommended Reasoner for employment during the May board meeting but withdrew the recommendation following board member concerns that Lewis had not personally interviewed the candidate. Lewis, who attended the meeting as an observer, later interviewed Reasoner.

Just prior to the vote at the June board meeting, Lewis reported favorably on his conversation with Reasoner. He asked Reasoner to share his testimony with executive committee members. Lewis, while acknowledging the action was an exception to regular hiring practice, then asked Reasoner to affirm his belief in the Baptist Faith and Message Statement and specifically asked if he agreed with Article 1 which defines the Bible as being "truth without any mixture of error."

The Missourian responded positively to the requests and to additional questions that he did not drink alcohol, use tobacco products and would not engage in any behavior that would be of embarrassment to the board. Response to a final question assured board members that Reasoner and his family would join and be active members of a Southern Baptist church after their move to Atlanta.

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After the candidate had left the room, board member Ronald Long, pastor of Glenwood Hills Baptist Church in Conyers, Ga., asked Lewis about Reasoner's stance on abortion. Lewis replied that Reasoner believed in the sanctity of life and that he would never counsel an individual to consider an abortion, though the choice would ultimately remain the responsibility of the mother. Lewis added that he was comfortable with the candidate's pro-life stance.

In an interview following the board meeting, Lewis said the testimony and questioning of a prospective employee would not necessarily become standard practice but grew out of the executive committee's May action.

Reasoner, a counselor at Midwest Christian Counseling Center in Kansas City for the past five years, replaced Gary Jones who was promoted to director of the personnel division. A native of Des Moines, Iowa, he will be responsible for providing psychological testing and evaluation for new missionaries.

A graduate of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and an ordained minister who served as pastor of churches in Florida and Missouri, Reasoner has more recently been employed as counselor for the Federal Bureau of Prisons and at the University of Missouri Counseling Center.

In his opening comments to the executive committee, Lewis said the nation would only be won to Christ by Bible-preaching, soul-winning churches.

"I'm excited about reaching our goal of 50,000 Southern Baptist churches by the year 2000. But to make it a reality we immediately need to begin 1,500 churches annually until the turn of the century and we need at least 1,000 fulltime church starters on the field," he said.

Combined with those efforts, he added that the winning of America could be reached if every SBC church would bring 20 people to Christ annually. "Most pastors should be able to win that many individuals to Christ during a year's time," he added.

"That's a reasonable goal, but it won't be achieved by talking or wishing," Lewis said, but by hard work and dedication. "Such a goal of 50,000 churches baptizing an average of 20 individuals a year would result in a million saved each year"--a goal not out of reach of Southern Baptists, he maintained.

Lewis said God called him to be a church planter 30 years ago and he kept that commitment even recently as a college president, seeking to start one church annually by students at Hannibal-LaGrange College. That calling will continue to guide him in his tenure as president of the Atlanta-based missions agency, he added.

The board also appointed 10 missionaries, six missionary associates, seven church planter apprentices, and approved 31 mission pastors.

## House Subcommittee Cuts Subsidy for Postal Rates

WASHINGTON (BP)—A House subcommittee has voted to eliminate federal funding to subsidize reduced postal rates for non-profit publications, including Baptist state newspapers and some church newsletters, for fiscal year 1988.

But the Treasury, Postal Service and General Government Subcommittee agreed to direct the Postal Service to maintain current rate levels for non-profit mailers for that period — October 1987 through September 1988. Under the plan, the Postal Service would absorb the loss in revenue.

The budget measure is expected to be brought up for a vote by the House Appropriations Committee and then the full House by the end of June. It then will go to the Senate for consideration.

In previous years, Congress has approved an annual revenue foregone appropriation to subsidize the difference between what the Postal Service would receive at full unreduced rates and what it actually receives at the reduced rates. But the Reagan administration repeatedly has proposed elimination of the subsidy and last summer the U.S. Postal Rate Commission recommended eliminating congressional funding.

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WMU Executive Board  
OK's \$10.7 Million Budget

By Karen Benson

Baptist Press  
6/15/87

ST. LOUIS (BP)—The executive board of the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union approved a \$10.7 million operating budget for 1987-88, learned giving to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions is down this year and added six voting members to the board during its bi-annual meeting June 13 in St. Louis.

The budget represents a 3.5 percent increase over the 1986-87 budget. Major budget items include \$3.3 million for staff salaries, \$2.3 million for magazine production and \$800,000 for personnel benefits.

Executive Director Carolyn Weatherford reported contributions to the Easter offering this year are lagging behind for the same period in 1986. To date, less than one-third of the \$37.5 million goal has been collected — a cause for concern, Weatherford said, since the highest levels of giving traditionally occur during March, April and May each year.

Speculation is that the offering giving is down due, in part, to some local churches withholding donations to protest trustee action by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board that discontinued financial support for women pastors, Weatherford said.

Weatherford said she had sent a letter to all Southern Baptist pastors in March urging them to not withhold funds but to continue to support the offering. She also urged the WMU state leaders to do all they can to promote the offering in their state conventions.

While the national WMU has stayed out of Southern Baptist Convention politics as much as possible in recent years. Weatherford said: "We are going to fight when missions support is at stake. ...We don't have a fight in the controversy except as it affects missions support."

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During the meeting, she called the WMU leaders into a prayer session for "Southern Baptists to forget the controversy and go to winning the world."

The six new members added to the board are Barbara Young of Anchorage, Alaska; Linda Johnston of Reno, Nev.; Mary Knapton of Endicott, N.Y.; Susan Brindle of Portsmouth, N.H.; Grady Cox of Bensalam, Penn.; and Roberta Cox Edwards of Brigham City, Utah.

The six became eligible for representation on the WMU board following action taken in January which patterns the method of representation after the method used by the SBC Executive Committee.

In other action, the board:

-- Directed the staff to conduct a review of the salary administration plan for national staff. Weatherford will appoint a committee to re-evaluate job classifications, hiring procedures and the document used in job evaluations. During a board meeting last year, WMU trustees determined to bring national WMU staff salaries into "parity" with other SBC boards and agencies "as quickly as possible," Weatherford said. Currently, WMU staff salaries are lower than any other SBC agency or board.

-- Ratified action taken by the board's finance committee June 1 that created the position of systems director. Anne Gore, financial services group manager, was promoted to the new position.

-- Named a new auditing firm. Ernst & Whinney will serve as external auditors for the 1986-87 budget year.

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Researchers Urged  
To Promote Work

By Tom Miller

Baptist Press  
6/15/87

ST. LOUIS (BP)--Southern Baptist agency and state convention research users have been asked to do more research, devote increasing resources to accomplish it and secure publicity for their work.

Don Mabry, president of the Southern Baptist Research Fellowship, told more than 50 participants at the group's annual meeting that "a lot more time, energy and money need to go into research," with increased attention to securing data on the local congregation.

"Most decisions in Southern Baptist life are being made on suppositions, not facts," said Mabry in his president's address to the group June 13.

"We need ways to share facts," he said, and urged submission of stories on research to Baptist Press, the Southern Baptist national news agency. Mabry is director of the missions division of the Louisiana Baptist Convention.

Bob Nowlin, director of the Christian social ministries division of the St. Louis Metro Baptist Association, acknowledged "you can use statistics for doing mental gymnastics, to say anything you want, and prove anything you wish." He called for using statistics to "create awareness of what's going on."

Churches in communities faced with change can face its reality or deny it, he said. If change is denied, the reaction to it is crisis and the struggle for survival will eventually bring death to the church.

"But if change is faced and accepted, it opens the way to responding to the change as an opportunity. You don't have to like the change," he said, "but if you accept it, you can deal with what's going on. Then you can redream the dream."

Women in Ministry  
Explore Brokenness

By Pam Parry

ST. LOUIS (BP) -- Racism, sexism and classism head the list of brokenness in the world examined by 400 women during the fifth annual meeting of Southern Baptist Women in Ministry June 13 and 14.

The event focused on visions of healing. The theme, "Living Toward a Vision of Shalom," was interpreted in three parts.

"Racism has not gone anyplace," said Catherine Meeks, a lay preacher and doctor of philosophy candidate at Emory University in Atlanta. "But what causes me the most pain is the realization the Lord's church has to stand at the head of the list of those responsible for allowing racism to continue to thrive in our society."

In addition to racism, she reminded participants their world is broken by sexism and classism. Meeks, who also is an instructor and director of Afro-American studies program at Mercer University in Atlanta, said the reason for so much evil in the world is what psychologists call "the shadow." She explained persons like to think of others as the "bad guy rather than confront their own badness."

"It is very important for individual human beings to claim their own role in making the world the way it is," Meeks said. "It would be interesting to see what would happen in this world if people would draw their shadows and come to face their own images of darkness and their own fears. I guess that is why Jesus came -- to give us the courage to do that."

In another major address, former Southern Baptist woman pastor Lynda Weaver-Williams told the women: "We are signs of the kingdom. We don't need to hold on so tight, grasping for grace that is already ours. Trust God and let go, brothers and sisters."

Weaver-Williams, former co-pastor of Goshen Baptist Church in Goshen, Ky., told the audience their response to God requires obedience.

"But it's not duty that brings us here," she added. "This is worship. It's beyond obligation; this is extravagance. There is not reasonable call to praise (for women ministers) hanging between two cliffs of this denominational chasm."

Assuring the women ministers that God alone commends them to their ministries, she said: "The world, the church, the children, the kingdom doesn't rest on my shoulders alone. I can let go of some of that control."

Another feature was a testimony by M. Vernon Davis, academic dean at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Mo., and his daughter, Carol Davis-Younger of Paoli, Ind. They described how they related to her call to the ministry.

Younger noted: "Calling is just like faith. It has to be your own. ... Ministry is a lifestyle more than just a job."

Davis said he had fears when he saw his daughter walk the aisle submitting to the ministry but that he celebrates with her: "We should not tell our daughters who are called to the ministry, 'Don't do it. There's no future in it.' Because there is."

Officers for Women in Ministry are Elizabeth S. Bellinger, chaplain, inner city ministry, Waco, Texas, president; Anne P. Roser, pastor, Hampton, Va., vice president; Diane E. Hill, Elizabeth City, N.C., recorder; Deborah Whisnand Stinson, chaplain, Houston Baptist Hospital in Texas, treasurer; Marilyn Prickett, director of Christian social ministries for the District of Columbia Baptist Convention, program coordinator; and Pat Bailey, professor of social work, Southern Seminary, membership coordinator.